GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4560
ANSWERED ON:14.12.2016
Expulsion of Diplomats
Galla Shri Jayadev;Patel Shri Prahlad Singh

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

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(a) whether recently two alleged Pakistani spies were caught while doing espionage;

(b) if so, the facts and details thereof;

(c) whether India has expelled a Pakistani staffer and declared him persona non grata and if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether in retaliation, Pakistan also expelled six of our staff from that country and if so, the details thereof; and

(e) whether the Government proposes to raise the issue of violation of basic diplomatic norms by Pakistan in the United Nations and if so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]

(a) to (c) On October 28, 2016 the Government of India declared Mehmood Akhtar, an official of the High Commission of Pakistan in New Delhi as persona non grata and asked for his return from India within two days. He was apprehended by Indian law enforcement authorities on October 27 while receiving sensitive documents pertaining to national security of India from two Indian nationals. During his interrogation, he revealed to Indian law enforcement authorities that he belonged to Baloch Regiment of Pakistan Army, joined Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan on deputation & had been posted in Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi since September 2013.

The Pakistan High Commissioner was summoned on October 28 by the Foreign Secretary. Government registered strong protest about the activities of Mehmood Akhtar which were incompatible with his status as a member of a diplomatic mission. Pakistan High Commissioner was also told to ensure that no member of their diplomatic mission should indulge in activities inimical to India or behave in a manner which is incompatible to their diplomatic status. Akhtar left India on October 29, 2016.

Towards end of October 2016, names of eight Pakistani officials working in the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi, some of which were reportedly mentioned by Mehmood Akhtar to Indian authorities during his investigation, appeared in media. Following this, Government of Pakistan decided to recall them. Accordingly on November 2, 2016, six Pakistan High Commission officials, including three diplomats and 25 of their family members left India for Pakistan. Two other officials and their family members returned to Pakistan later during the month. The Government had no role in this decision of Government of Pakistan.

(d) & (e) On October 27 itself, in an apparent tit-for-tat, Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared Shri Surjeet Singh, Assistant Personnel and Welfare Officer in the Indian High Commission in Islamabad as persona non grata due to activities "incompatible with his diplomatic status". No justification for this baseless allegation against Shri Singh was provided by the Government of Pakistan. The Government rejected the unfounded allegations against Shri Singh, and made arrangements for his travel to India on October 29.

On November 3, 2016, at the likely behest of their Government, Pakistani media published details of Indian officials (along with their photographs) working in the Indian High Commission in Islamabad alleging that they were involved in "subversive activities". This was in blatant violation of established diplomatic norms and practices followed globally. On the same day, the Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed media during press briefing that eight Indian diplomats and staff were found involved in subversive activities and a litany of baseless charges was leveled against them including creating controversies related to Pak-China trade, exploiting sectarian rifts, creating unrest in Gilgit-Baltistan, exploiting minorities including Hindus, Sikhs and Ahmadiyas to create trouble in Pakistan, cultivating disgruntled elements in Baluchistan & facilitating their visits to India under fake medical visas and creating propaganda network to malign the right to self-determination in "Indian-occupied Kashmir". It was also alleged that these officials had linkages with the alleged "network of Kulbhushan Jadhav".

The Ministry of External Affairs rejected the baseless and unsubstantiated allegations made by Pakistan against the officials of Indian High Commission in Islamabad and expressed regret that Pakistan authorities chose to level such allegations after deciding to recall, on their own, six officials of the Pakistan High Commission some of whom may have been named to Indian authorities by Mehmood Akhtar.

These eight Indian officials were subsequently withdrawn in the month of November 2016 in view of their safety.

In expelling Mehmood Akhtar, Government took the step in the interest of national security. The Government addresses all bilateral matters with Pakistan through bilateral means.